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# Department of Planning, Housing, & Community Development

## Business Friendly Reforms and Development Review Improvements

*The following are 27 existing and proposed legislative and process improvements developed as a result of feedback received from the development community, City Council, and residents that will result in a more streamlined, efficient, timely and predictable development review process.*

*NOTE: The Building Policy and Procedures Project Team is comprised of staff from Planning, Building and Construction, Legal, Economic Development, and Engineering.*

### **LEGISLATIVE IMPROVEMENTS**

#### **ACTION: Reduce the need for parking variances**

- Incentivize new businesses to open within existing vacant underutilized storefronts by eliminating parking requirements for existing nonresidential tenant spaces that are less than 2,500 square feet.
- Incentivize the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of Landmark structures by creating provisions that would authorize the Planning Commission to waive or reduce parking for new uses in a Landmark structure.
- Expand shared parking allowances and create forms and uniform procedures designed to expedite approval of shared parking agreements.
- Other ideas under consideration: Fee-in-Lieu of Parking for new construction downtown and parking reductions for developments that provide a transit amenity.

Outcomes: Support new business development, reduce delays in opening a new business, expedite review and approval of development applications, reduce variances related to parking, reduce the need to create paved parking lots.

Implementation: 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team, City Council

**ACTION: 'Clean up' Code to improve predictability and ease of use**

- **Remove Series B Site Plan review from Code which had previously been removed by City Council Ordinance but never redacted from Code. Removal of Series B clarifies that more uses are permitted by right and eligible for site plan exception review. Significantly more land uses would be exempt from public hearing requirements which would result in the ability for staff to expedite the review and approval of more development applications.**
- **Update land use definitions to be consistent with current business practices allowing potential business owners and staff to more easily identify the proper use classification for proposed businesses.**
- **Add references throughout Code. For example when a land use in a zoning district is subject to particular criteria, the section number where the criteria is will be added next to that land use.**

Outcomes: Improve clarity, predictability, and consistency of Zoning Code.

Implementation: 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team, City Council

**ACTION: Reduce public notice requirement from 10 to 7 calendar days and create staff notification provisions.**

Outcomes: Reduce costs to applicant related to certified mailing and newspaper notices; reduce notification errors resulting in delayed public hearings.

Implementation: 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team, City Council

**ACTION: Amend Historic Preservation Code to establish an Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness for certain small projects.**

Outcome: Expedite review and approval of certain small improvements to Landmark properties and properties within a Local Historic District by allowing Staff to act on behalf of CAUD thereby eliminating need for appearance at CAUD meeting.

Implementation: 2nd Quarter 2013 – part of **Business Friendly** Zoning Update

Responsible Party(ies): Planning (Historic Preservation), City Council

**ACTION: Adopt Community Food Systems Zoning Amendments.**

Outcomes: Increase access to healthy, local, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods, and encourage community-building, support local agriculture, spur economic development, and strengthen property rights.

Implementation: 2nd Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Planning, City Council

**ACTION: Revise Sign Regulations.**

Outcomes: Amend sign regulations to reflect site/building size and conditions and eliminate 'one size fits all' restrictions. Eliminate number of area variances required for signage and streamline permitting process.

Implementation: 1st Quarter 2014

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team, City Council

**ACTION: Amend Chapter 227 Erosion and Sediment.**

Outcomes: Reduced uncertainty in the development review process by creating clear and predictable standards and procedures for stormwater management by codifying existing Engineering Department's practice of requiring the on-site retention of a 10 year storm event.

Implementation: 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2012

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team, Engineering, City Council

**PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

**ACTION: Eliminate SEQR Determination meeting for projects appearing before the Zoning Board of Appeals.**

Outcomes: Reduce review time by approximately 30 days and number of required meetings from 2 to 1.

Implementation: Currently effective

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team, Zoning Board of Appeals, Corporation Counsel

**ACTION: Explore legality of eliminating SEQR Determination meeting for projects appearing before the Planning Commission.**

Outcomes: Reduce review time by approximately 30 days and number of required meetings from 2 to 1.

Implementation: 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team, Planning Commission, Corporation Counsel

**ACTION: Revise checklist of submittal requirements for planning and zoning applications.**

Outcome: Reduce project delays by adequately providing applicants with an itemized list of all possible information that may be required for the review of their project.

Implementation: 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2013, currently effective

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team

**ACTION: Revise planning application.**

Outcome: Improve clarity and ease of use.

Implementation: First Phase Completed; Second Phase 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team

**ACTION: Conduct completeness review for planning applications within 72 hours of submittal and notify applicants immediately of missing information.**

Outcome: Reduce delays in the setting of public hearings by insuring that complete applications are forwarded to Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Implementation: 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2013 – Currently effective.

Responsible Party(ies): Planning

**ACTION: Personal follow-up from BEDO with all those who attend Pre-Development Meeting.**

Outcome: Personal follow-up telephone call from Economic Development to each Pre-Development Meeting attendee. Support proposed development by ensuring developer has received all necessary information early in the process.

Implementation: 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2013—currently effective

Responsible Party(ies): Economic Development

**ACTION: Hold bi-monthly meetings of Building Policy and Procedures Team.**

Outcome: Continue to make adjustments and improvements to the Development Review process.

Implementation: Effective since 2008

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team

**ACTION: Create rules for the conduct of public hearings before the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.**

Outcome: Insure the orderly conduct of public hearings and facilitate a fully informed decision.

Implementation: Currently effective

Responsible Party(ies): Planning, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals

**ACTION: Create Development Review Page on the City's Website.**

Outcome: Establish a centralized webpage containing all necessary information related to the Development Review process.

Implementation: 2nd Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Building Policies and Procedures Team

**ACTION: Post Staff Reports, Agendas, Minutes and Decisions for Planning related Boards and Commissions on the City's Website.**

Outcome: Increase transparency of Boards and Commissions.

Implementation: 2nd Quarter 2013 (agendas, minutes and decisions are currently posted)

Responsible Party(ies): Planning

**ACTION: Formalize Shade Tree Commission Meeting Schedule; Post Meeting Schedule, Agendas, Reports and Minutes on City's Website.**

Outcome: Increase transparency of the Shade Tree Commission.

Implementation: 2nd Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Planning

**ACTION: Create Historic Design Guidelines.**

Outcomes: Provide property owners and CAUD with specific guidance on how to properly maintain historic buildings. Create certainty in the design review process for projects meeting the Guidelines and reduce project review time.

Implementation: 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2011

Responsible Party(ies): Planning (Historic Preservation), CAUD

**ACTION: Publish Historic Guidelines and Distribute to Local Design Professionals.**

Outcome: Provide copies of the Guidelines at no cost to those responsible for project designs.

Implementation: 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Planning (Historic Preservation)

**ACTION: Add Historic Property Designation to Broome County GIS.**

Outcome: Provide easily accessible historic designation information to the public and increased transparency.

Implementation: Currently available

Responsible Party(ies): Broome County GIS and Planning (Historic Preservation)

**ACTION: Historic Preservation and Tax Credit/Abatement Outreach.**

Outcome(s): Assist property owners of Local Landmark properties in identifying funding sources for improvements to historic properties and provide information regarding historic perseveration. With additional funding resources, outreach could be expanded to all historic properties.

Implementation: 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Planning (Historic Preservation)

**ACTION: Establish Email Based Review Process for the Waterfront Advisory Committee (WAC).**

Outcomes: Reduce project review times, streamline review process, and reduce the number of meetings an applicant must attend.

Implementation: Currently effective

Responsible Party(ies): Planning (Historic Preservation), WAC

**ACTION: Create Guidelines for Tree Planting.**

Outcomes: Reduce project review times by establishing easily referenced list of trees acceptable for planting within the City. Provide property owners and Shade Tree Commission with specific tree planting guidance. Reduce costs to property owners and developers by limiting instances of tree failure caused by planting of trees not suitable to the City's climate.

Implementation: 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2012

Responsible Party(ies): Planning, Parks and Recreation, Shade Tree Commission

**ACTION: Create Development Review Map.**

Outcomes: Identify development activity; assist with targeted economic development outreach; identify problematic zoning regulations requiring amendments.

Implementation: 3rd Quarter 2013

Responsible Party(ies): Planning, Broome County GIS

**ACTION: Conduct Annual Development Review Survey.**

Outcome: Provide a mechanism to obtain constructive feedback in making the development review process more efficient and convenient without compromising our commitment to quality development consistent with local laws and community-based plans.

Implementation: Currently effective

Responsible Party(ies): Planning, Binghamton University

**ACTION: Hold Annual Roundtable with the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.**

Outcome: Identify opportunities to improve the development review and public hearing processes.

Implementation: Currently effective

Responsible Party(ies): Planning, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals